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FM AMEMBASSY RABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0800  
INFO RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA PRIORITY 4758  
RUCNMGH/MAGHREB COLLECTIVE  
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 0091  
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 0001  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0120  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0032  
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0512  
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 0051

S E C R E T RABAT 000889

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR INR, INL/AAE, NEA/RA AND AF/W  
MADRID FOR DEA  
PARIS FOR DEA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/29/2019  
TAGS: SNAR PINS MO WI  
SUBJECT: DRUG TRAFFICKING IN NORTH AFRICA: MOROCCO

REF: A. STATE 105731 (NOTAL)  
1B. IIR 6 865 0093 09 (NOTAL)  
1C. IIR 6 865 0007 10 (NOTAL)  
1D. RABAT 0886

Classified By: DCM Robert P. Jackson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Morocco continues to be a major producer of cannabis and cannabis resin, although government eradication efforts have reduced the acreage under cultivation.

According to the Moroccan government, South American drug smugglers continue to transport quantities of cocaine through the country and onward to Europe. Government officials opine that the same routes used to move drugs and people could be used for terrorist purposes, but have been unable to provide evidence that this is occurring. END SUMMARY.

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BY LAND...  
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12. (SBU) Traffickers today use weak and unstable states in West Africa as a staging area for transshipment through Morocco and on to Western Europe. Moroccan law enforcement officials argue that weak countries in the neighborhood lead to inadequately controlled borders to the south and east, creating a vast no-man's land in which illicit trafficking can flourish. They describe land routes that connect Gao (Mali), Bechar (Algeria), and Oujda (Morocco) with the ultimate destination of the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta or Melilla. Another route moves from Niger across the vast expanse of southern Algerian desert to Bechar. A third route crosses Mali, Mauritania and the Western Sahara to Las Palmas in the Canary Islands before proceeding to Western Europe.

13. (SBU) The officials identify Nigeria as the African point of origin for the illicit movement of people and narcotics along these routes. According to Moroccan statistics, 18.2 kilograms of cocaine have been seized thus far in 2009, down from 33.8 kilograms for all of 2008 and 248.8 kilos in 2007, most of it intercepted at airports and carried by persons traveling from Nigeria. According to the GOM, South American cartels move the drugs to West Africa, before being transported through Morocco en route to Spain and other European countries. They note that in 2009 they discovered 60 caches of cannabis resin awaiting transport by speedboats to Spain, and expect that cocaine could be brought to and from Spain the same way. GOM officials have confirmed that

heroin is imported into the province of Tangier from Europe, through the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla.

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...AND BY SEA  
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¶ 14. (C) According to the GOM, the Moroccan government has established over 250 outposts along its northern and southern coasts designed to prevent and intercept the maritime trafficking of drugs. The Moroccan Royal Navy has good working relationships with European police and military but lacks the high-speed interceptor type patrol craft to effectively counter maritime drug smuggling, Admiral Berrada-Gouzi, Inspector General (Chief of Staff) of the Navy, told his U.S. counterpart on October 7 (Ref B).

¶ 15. (C) In the Agadir area on the southern Moroccan coast, commercial and artisanal fishing boats are engaged in smuggling activities bringing illicit cargo into the country. Nearly 1,500 vessels are registered and operate in an area stretching along 320 kilometers of Moroccan coastline and south through the waters off the coast of Western Sahara to Mauritania. Several of the more than 250 commercial boats are involved in smuggling. Some captains are paid to pick up packages dropped at sea; others are coerced to do so by threats against their families (Ref C).

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BACK HOME  
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¶ 16. (SBU) Morocco's cannabis eradication efforts, reported in Ref D, have led to the disruption of local economies as small-scale farmers have replaced cannabis with other crops, including olives, figs and carob. Although the GOM argues that these substitution efforts have been successful, officials in two northern Moroccan cities, Chefchaouen and Tetouan, described an influx of rural populations as farmers struggle to support their families using replacement crops. Cannabis production, processing and trade fostered localized economies built on the illicit wealth, much like the cartels in South America, according to one interlocutor, but without the marked tendency toward violence. Government officials assert that organized and transnational crime in Morocco is a recent phenomenon (within the last 20 years) and is a result of Morocco's relative economic success, which has made it attractive to international networks.

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NO CONCLUSIVE LINK TO TERRORISM  
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¶ 17. (S/NF) The Moroccan Government believes that the same land and sea routes described above -- and the revenue generated by the illicit trade in drugs, contraband or persons -- could also be used to support terrorist purposes. However, they have not provided evidence to support this hypothesis.

¶ 18. (U) Morocco has frequently expressed its willingness to expand cooperation with the U.S. on drug-related issues. In 2009, the Mission funded training programs focused on border interdiction, cargo control and fraudulent document detection.

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Kaplan